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Charity a to support war

A former leader of U.S. commando forces in Southeast Asia was behind a plot to use a CIA-linked relief agency as a secret supply line for anti-Communist rebels in Cambodia and Laos.

However, the plan recently collapsed when the relief agency, World Medical Relief, balked at providing the supplies, The Plain Dealer has learned.

Harry C. (Heinie) Aderholt, a retired brigadier general who once led Air Force commando units, confirmed that he attempted to establish the supply line, which would have supported guerrilla activity inside Laos and Cambodia.

World Medical Relief decided against helping Aderholt, according to charity official Clara Kohn, because "we learned that the group he's working with was being investigated" by the U.S. government.

Kohn identified the group as being affiliated with Soldier of Fortune magazine of Boulder, Colo.

Aderholt, 62, is no stranger to World Medical Relief. While leading the Air Force's 1st Air Commandos — a unit similar to the Army's Green Berets — Aderholt often distributed World Medical Relief supplies around the world, according to charity officials.

Aderholt also commanded all U.S. military forces in Thailand during the latter stages of the Vietnam War. He retired in 1976.

Another of World Medical Relief's key contacts was Daniel C. Arnold, who distributed the group's supplies while serving as CIA chief of station in Bangkok in the late 1970s.

Although Aderholt failed to obtain World Medical Relief supplies, he told The Plain Dealer he and his associates managed to purchase medicine in Thailand for the anti-Communist resistance through "private grants" and fund-raising appeals. He did not elaborate on the source of the funds.

William Brooks, who identified himself as associate editor of Soldier of Fortune, confirmed much of Aderholt's account. "I know I've seen the medical supplies. They come through here, so I know that's what he's sending. In fact, there's a ton of that stuff down in the warehouse right now, if I'm not mistaken," Brooks said.

A State Department spokesman said the U.S. government had no knowledge of any private effort to supply anti-Communist rebels in Laos or Cambodia. World Medical Relief President Irene Auberlin said Aderholt first contacted her relief agency in April to help Laotian refugees "return to their country."

Soon after, Aderholt told The Plain Dealer the supplies would help the anti-Communist resistance wage its fight inside Laos and Cambodia. "When a guy gets wounded, when a guy gets malaria, when a guy gets sick, he could be treated within the area and not come out," said Aderholt in a July telephone interview from Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

Aderholt said he operates an import firm in Ft. Walton Beach and a furniture factory in Bangkok.

Aderholt said that in late summer he planned to send a representative to World Medical Relief to pick up "all kinds of supplies (from) a shopping list for the Cambodes (sic) and the Lao resistance."

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